



Gresham, 1897

Builder: Globe Iron Works, Cleveland, Ohio

Length: 205' 6"

Beam: 32'

Draft: 12'

Displacement: 1,090 tons

Powerplant: Triple-expansion steam

Cost: \$147,080

Commissioned: 30 May 1897

Decommissioned: 19 January 1935

Disposition: Sold; brought back into service 23 May 1943; decommissioned and sold once again 7 April 1944.

Complement: 9 officers, 63 men

Armament: 1 x 1 pounder; 2 x 6 pounders; 3 x .50 caliber (1930); bow torpedo tube?

Cutter History:

by John Tilley

The revenue cutter *Gresham* was built by the Globe Iron Works Company of Cleveland, Ohio, for service on the Great Lakes. For several years the 205-foot cutter and its near-sisters *Manning*, *McCulloch*, *Algonquin*, and *Onondaga* were the pride of the Revenue Cutter Service. They were equipped with all the most modern features: steel hulls, electrical generators (the first in the service) to power their lights and call bells, and triple-expansion engines that gave an impressive top speed of 18 knots. *Gresham*, named after a recently deceased former Secretary of the Treasury, had a navy-style plow bow fitted with a torpedo tube for wartime operations.

In 1898 the United States declared war on Spain, the Revenue Cutter Service was absorbed by the Navy, and *Gresham* was ordered to the Atlantic coast. Since its hull was too long to fit in the locks on the St. Lawrence Seaway, the cutter had to be cut in half and shipped through in pieces. The war ended before it could be welded back together. *Gresham* never went back to the lakes, but enjoyed a successful career in the Atlantic. Its most famous exploit probably was the rescue of the crew of the foundering steamer *SS Republic* in 1909.

The Coast Guard sold *Gresham* for scrapping in 1935. The Second World War, however, set the service on a desperate search for any hull that could carry guns and depth charges. In March of 1943 the *Gresham* was reacquired, re-commissioned as a Coast Guard cutter, and fitted out as an escort for coastal convoys. A new superstructure, radar, 3-inch guns, and anti-submarine gear almost let the old vessel masquerade as an up-to-date warship, but not quite. *Gresham* proved unable to keep up with its convoys, and was decommissioned for good, before the end of the war.
